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Performing Arts: Dance

PERFORMANCE MIX FESTIVAL

June 13, 2022

Entering its 36th year, the Performance Mix Festival, hosted at Abrons Arts Center, is the longest-running women-led experimental theater festival in New York City. This year featured 12 shows between Thursday and Sunday, platforming more than 35 artists. Friday night's Program B included works by David Lee Sierra, Kayla Hamilton, and Blaze Ferrer, a wonderfully diverse trio that complemented each other in their immense differences.

David Lee Sierra opened with *Public Structures of Feeling*, a rich and disturbing endurance performance. Entering at a sensuous pace with all the gravitas of a high fashion pop star, she sported ten-inch pleaser heels and, as her costume changed from glittering chains dripping down her chest and thighs into tight latex, little was left to the imagination. Pounding techno music and droning synthesizers accompanied Sierra mounting a piece of scaffolding, where she found precarious balances and excruciating holds tangled among the bars. Bathed in deeply saturated light she smeared herself in blood, turning her platinum blonde hair dark and stringy.

In stark contrast, *How to Bend Down/How to Pick Up* by Kayla Hamilton, was introduced as "still in its dreaming stage". Such a dreaming stage involved description and experimentation of what the performance might become as it explored the history of cotton as it "threads between Blackness and visual Disability". Striking moments included a verbally guided dance solo that evolved with the inflection of the repeated choreographic directions and the final dance, set to Lead Belly's "Pick a Bale of Cotton", that had the dancers executing repetitious motions as they moved up and down the stage.

Blaze Ferrer closed the show with *Diamond Dessert Cuck*, a queer romp featuring two dancers in bedazzled bodysuits with Furby faces affixed to their crotches. As a dreamy score played they ran in circles side by side, arms swinging with increasing verve, punctuated by moments of stillness where they rose into careful relevé. The expansion and contraction of their bodies' heavy breathing was accentuated by their glittering costumes. In the performance's climactic moment, a shining cape was lifted into the air by a fan. The billowing fabric evoked a queer jellyfish, under which a dancer churned and rolled about the floor.

All in all, a thoroughly entertaining night at a performance festival whose work feels necessary, not only for an audience but also for the development of the presenting artists.

EYE ON THE ARTS, NY -- Noah Witke Mele